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SOCIETY
OF
Unitarian Christians,
Established in the West of England. K

THE Christian Religion deriving its origin from the immediate revelation of God, and being the scheme which infinite wisdom has chosen as best calculated to lead men to virtue and happiness, must be of the greatest value to mankind. But as it operates upon the minds of those who embrace it only by the excellence of its doctrines and institutions, its utility is lessened in proportion as these are corrupted. That christianity has suffered great injury by the additions made to it, since the time of Christ and his Apostles, is readily allowed by all protestants; and they have exerted themselves with commendable zeal to remove them. To us it is equally evident that many errors are still retained by protestants themselves, no less pernicious than those which have been abandoned. To endeavour therefore to obtain a further reformation of religion, and to restore it to the standard of original purity, must be regarded as a useful and benevolent undertaking, worthy of the zealous exertions of all those who wish to promote the religious improvement and happiness of the human race. It is to accomplish this important purpose, in conjunction with others of the same sentiments with ourselves in other parts of the kingdom, that this Society is formed.



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Considering that one principal obstruction to the progress of just sentiments in religion has arisen from the want of an open avowal of them by those by whom they have been embraced, or of other methods of making them known to the world, we have thought proper to associate ourselves together, in order to distribute among those who are disposed to enquire, such books as appear to us to contain the purest account of the doctrines of revelation, and to be the best calculated to promote the interests of true piety and virtue, but more particularly among such persons as from their situation in life are precluded in a great measure from obtaining the means of information, declaring it to be the fundamental principle of the Society, in which we all agree, THAT THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, THE CREATOR AND GOVERNOR OF THE UNIVERSE, WITHOUT AN EQUAL OR A VICEGERENT, THE ONLY PROPER OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP; AND THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS THE MOST EMINENT OF THOSE MESSENGERS WHICH HE HAS EMPLOYED TO REVEAL HIS WILL TO MANKIND, POSSESSING EXTRAORDINARY POWERS SIMILAR TO THOSE RECEIVED BY OTHER PROPHETS, BUT IN A MUCH HIGHER DEGREE.

While we thus declare our belief in the strict unity of God, and cannot but regard every practice as idolatrous which attributes any of the prerogatives of the Deity to another, a conclusion in which we think ourselves warranted by the language of scripture, we would not be understood to assert that we think such practices are attended with the same immoral consequences as the idolatry which prevailed in the ancient heathen world. That they are however in *all* cases injurious, and in *some* highly criminal, we have no doubt, but how far they may be so in any particular instance we pretend not to determine, as it must depend upon circumstances which can be known only to the individuals concerned, and to that Being who searches their hearts.

In laying down the above principles as the fundamental maxims of the Society, we do no more than exercise the authority which

which every society possesses, of determining the object for which they associate, and to the promoting which they choose to limit their endeavours. No one can justly complain that he is injured or aggrieved hereby. If others should think fit to form societies for propagating such views of the Christian Religion as are different from those we entertain, they have an undoubted right to do so, and they will not be censured by us; for we admit in the most unrestrained sense, the right of every man to think for himself in matters of religion, and apprehend that this right extends to judging of the importance of opinions as well as of the truth of them. We wish not to prevent the discussion of what we deem the genuine principles of christianity, but to procure for them an impartial and candid examination: by this means we trust that the truth will at length prevail, and the welfare of the human race be greatly advanced.

R U L E S.

I. This Society shall be denominated THE SOCIETY OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, ESTABLISHED IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, BY DISTRIBUTING BOOKS.

II. There shall be a general meeting of the members of this Society every year, on the day and at the place that may be fixed upon at the preceding general meeting; and a meeting of the committee, consisting of such members as reside in the city of Exeter, and within twenty miles of it, on the first Friday after New-year's-day, Lady-day, Midsummer-day, and Michaelmas-day. At the general annual meeting *seven* shall constitute a sufficient number to proceed to business, and at the quarterly committee *three*.

III. At every general meeting the minutes of the intervening quarterly committees, as well as of the last general meeting shall be read; also the auditors' report of the state of the Treasurer's

surer's accounts, and all such letters or abstracts of them as the committee shall direct to be laid before the Society.

IV. The object of the quarterly committee shall be to carry into effect the resolutions of the general meetings, to superintend the printing and circulation of the books and tracts approved by the Society, and to transact all such business as is not expressly reserved for the general meetings.

V. Every person recommended after the meeting in May 1792, by two members, shall be considered as a member of this Society, upon paying his admission fee and subscription for the current year, or compounding for his subscription.

VI. Every member shall pay the sum of half-a-guinea on his admission, and such further sum as he shall think proper; provided the same be not less than half-a-guinea per annum. Any person subscribing five guineas at one time shall be a member of this Society for life, and entitled to a nomination of books equal to that of an annual subscriber of half-a-guinea, and so in proportion for any larger sum. All subscriptions paid during any part of the year shall be considered as commencing from the first Friday after New-year's-day in such year, and in like manner to terminate on that day twelvemonth: but no annual subscriber shall be entitled to vote at any meeting, or to receive or purchase any books or tracts of the Society, 'till his subscription for the current year be paid.

VII. The Society will thankfully receive any benefaction or legacy, for the better enabling them to promote their general design.

VIII. At each meeting of the Society a Chairman shall be appointed for the meeting, who shall have a casting vote. At the general meeting in every year, a Treasurer and Secretary shall be elected by ballot for the year ensuing. In case of a vacancy in either of these offices, the committee shall proceed to elect a successor at the next quarterly meeting, notice of such election having been given in the previous summonses.

IX. All bills due to the Secretary, or to any persons employed by

by the Society, amounting to the sum of five pounds or upwards, shall be first allowed and countersigned by two members at the quarterly committee, before the treasurer shall discharge them. And the Treasurer's accounts shall be examined and balanced by any two members, indifferently chosen, at the quarterly meeting preceding every general meeting.

X. The Secretary shall keep a book, wherein he shall enter minutes of the proceedings and resolutions of the Society at their several meetings : he shall give notice of all general meetings to each of the members, and of all meetings of the quarterly committee. He shall also attend to the receipt and direction of all packets, and keep a regular account of the same, and of the expences incurred. And previously to the general meeting in every year, he shall apply to all the members for the payment of their subscriptions, and shall upon all occasions, observe the orders and directions given by the Society.

XI. Every book or tract, printed or in manuscript, proposed to this Society, shall be recommended in writing by three members at a quarterly meeting, in the form following, viz.

“ We whose names are underwritten, being members of the SOCIETY OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, ESTABLISHED IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, do recommend a treatise entitled -----, as a book worthy of the patronage of the Society, and of being printed [or purchased] and received into their catalogue ; and are persuaded that it is calculated to promote the general design of the Society. Dated the ---- day of -----.”

And its admission, and the number of copies to be printed or purchased, or its rejection, shall be determined by ballot at the next quarterly meeting. And if at any time hereafter it shall be thought proper to withdraw any book or tract from the catalogue of the Society's books, the same shall be moved and seconded at one quarterly meeting, and voted by ballot at the next ; notice of such measure being given in the summonses.

XII. Upon

XII. Upon all questions to be determined by ballot, two-thirds of the members present shall be necessary to carry any proposal or question in the affirmative.

XIII. The Society shall from time to time, and as soon as conveniently may be, proceed to apportion the amount of each member's nomination of books (according to his subscription), and determine, by lot, the order or rotation in which they shall be sent. And when such order of nomination is settled, they shall direct the Secretary to acquaint by letter the members whose names shall stand first in such rotation, of the amount of their nomination, in the following form, viz.

“ Sir, An allotment of books, amounting to the sum of ----- were on the ---- instant ordered by THE SOCIETY OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, ESTABLISHED IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, to be at your disposal, which it is expected you will claim in person, or by written order to be sent to the Secretary within three months, otherwise the nomination will lapse to the Society. I am, &c.”

XIV. Every subscriber may at any time purchase any quantity of books at the price marked in the Society's catalogue, by applying to the Secretary, and paying the money as soon as the order is given.

XV. All books printed for, or purchased and distributed by, the Society shall be accompanied with a label in the following form, viz. PRINTED FOR [OR DISTRIBUTED BY] THE SOCIETY OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, ESTABLISHED IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE; to be annexed, at the option of the subscriber.

XVI. The rules of the Society shall be printed and sent to every member; likewise an alphabetical list of the members, and a catalogue of their books, with the prices at which they are rated and sold, together with a general state of the Society's affairs, shall be annually printed and sent to all the members.

XVII. Proper

XVII. Proper measures shall be used to open and to establish such a correspondence with the Unitarian Society in London, and with all parts of the kingdom, as shall tend to promote the design of the Society.

XVIII. The members and friends of the Society will dine together at their general meeting in every year.

XIX. The foregoing rules shall not be altered, nor any new rule be made, otherwise than by the vote of two-thirds of the members present at a general meeting, to be taken by ballot.

AT a Meeting of Unitarian Christians, held in Exeter, May 11th, 1792;

RICHARD HALL CLARKE, Esq; in the Chair;

Resolved, I. That the preceding declaration and rules being agreed upon, be printed and transmitted to the several members.

II. That the first general meeting of the subscribers be held at Crediton, on the 6th of September, 1792; and that the Rev. Mr. *Toulmin* be desired to preach a sermon upon the occasion.

III. That *Richard Hall Clarke*, Esq; be desired to act as Treasurer, and the Rev. Mr. *Kenrick* as Secretary, for the present year.

IV. That the thanks of this meeting be given to *Richard Hall Clarke*, Esq; for acting as Chairman.

On behalf of the meeting, RICHARD HALL CLARKE.

AT a General Meeting of the Society of Unitarian Christians established in the West of England, held at Crediton, in the County of Devon, September 6th, 1792;

WILLIAM ROWE, Esq; in the Chair;

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to the Rev. Mr. *Toulmin*, for the discourse which he delivered to-day, and that he be requested to publish it.

That the next general meeting of this Society be held at Taunton, on Friday the 10th of May, 1793, and that the Rev. Mr. *Kenrick* be desired to preach upon that occasion.

LIST

LIST of the MEMBERS.

Those Persons marked * are Members for Life.

- * Rev. Matthew Anstice, Bridport, Dorsetshire.
- * Rev. Thomas Belsham, New College, Hackney.
- Mr. William Brown, jun. Collumpton.
- Mr. Bafnett, Bath.
- Richard Hall Clarke, Esq; Bridwell, near Collumpton.
- Mr. Davy, Fordton, near Crediton, Devon.
- Mr. Martin Dunsford, Tiverton.
- Mr. George Dunsford, Tiverton.
- Mr. Jonathan Evans, Exeter.
- Rev. Jacob Isaac, Moreton, Devon.
- Rev. David B. Jardine, Bath.
- Samuel Kenrick, Esq; Bewdley, Worcestershire.
- Rev. Timothy Kenrick, Exeter.
- Rev. John Kentish, Plymouth-Dock.
- * Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, Essex-street, London.
- Joseph Littlefear, Esq; Exeter.
- Rev. Thomas Morgan, Liskeard, Cornwall.
- Rev. Samuel Morgan, Collumpton.
- Samuel Pett, Esq;
- Rev. Thomas Porter, Plymouth.
- Rev. Thomas Reynell, Thorverton, Devon.
- Mr. William Reynell, Barnstaple.
- William Rowe, Esq; Spence-Comb, near Crediton.
- Rev. John Rowe, Shrewsbury.
- Mr. Stephen Shute, Collumpton.
- Mr. John Spry, Plymouth.
- * William Tayleur, Esq; Shrewsbury.
- John Tingcombe, Esq; Plymouth.
- Rev. Joshua Toulmin, Taunton.
- Mr. Tucker, Exeter.
- Rev. John Williams, Bridwell, near Collumpton.



The proper Form for a BENEFACTION to the Society, by WILL.

Also, I, A. B. do hereby give and bequeath unto C. D. of -----, and E. F. of -----, the sum of -----, to be raised and paid out of my personal estate, upon trust, that they or either of them do pay the same to the treasurer, for the time being, of a voluntary society, commonly called or known by the name of a *Society of Unitarian Christians, established in the West of England*; the same to be paid within ----- months after my decease, and to be applied to the uses and purposes of that society.

